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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet is designed to serve as a prompt for principals and teachers to help them anticipate questions parents might ask when they send their children to school for the first time or when they enroll their children in a different school. The pamphlet can also serve as a checklist for parents as they become involved with their children's education. Questions are organized by different levels of schooling, from preschool to high school. Preschool questions include those related to fostering social skills, preparing children for kindergarten, and helping with the transition to kindergarten. Elementary school questions address curriculum, parental involvement, and measuring children's academic and social progress. Questions for middle schools cover class size, the role of the guidance counselor, the transition to high school, and preparation for college. High school questions cover guidance available regarding course selection, college selection and preparation, and participation in technology events. General questions address school policy issues such as homework, promotion, prevention programs, absences, and computers. (LPP)

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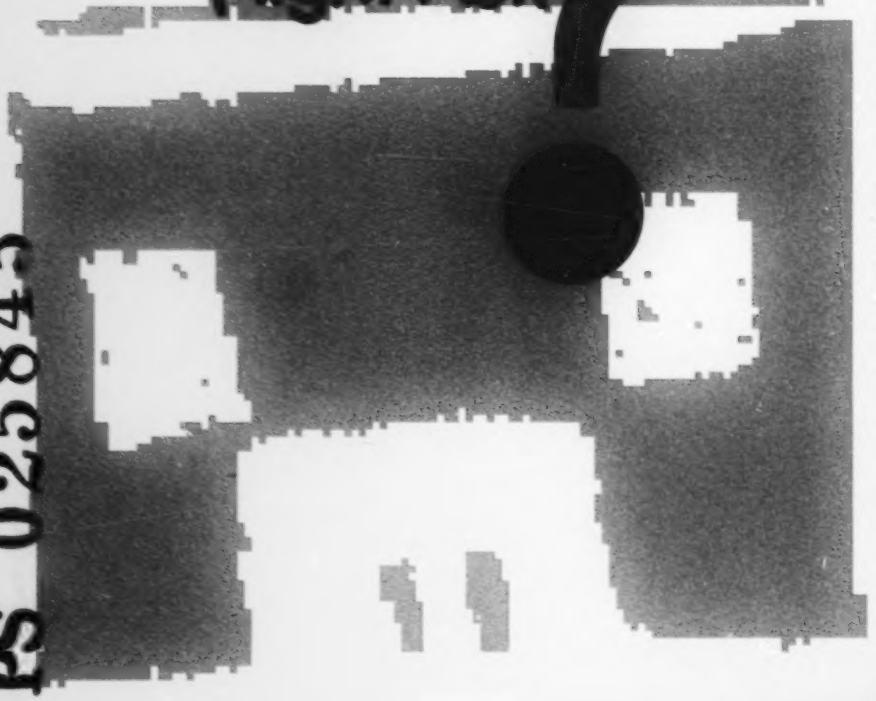
Welcome To School

Questions Parents Might Ask



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Preschool Questions

- What are the hours of operation?
- In what ways does the school or child care nurture children?
- How does the school foster social skills?
- In what ways does the school develop intellectual curiosity?
- Is the school licensed?
- How much does the program cost?
- Are meals included in the fees? Do meals meet nutritional requirements?
- Are there resources available to help pay the fees?
- How large is the class? How many children are there for each teacher? Is there an aide?
- What are the health requirements?
- How do you address "separation anxiety?"
- How do you prepare children for entry to kindergarten—both academically and socially? Do you have a checklist for school readiness?
- How can parents help with the transition to kindergarten?
- What do you suggest parents do when their children are not ready for kindergarten?
- How often should I be reading to my child?
- Is there a music and arts program?

Elementary School Questions

- What is the school's total enrollment and average class size?
- What is the curriculum for my child's grade?
- What type of parental involvement is the most helpful?
- How can I become involved? And what activities can I do at home to reinforce school lessons?
- How do you measure a child's academic and social progress?
- Are all students expected to read independently by the end of the third grade?
- What help is available for children who are behind or ahead academically and socially?
- What happens when individual teachers and students just don't get along? Are children allowed to transfer to another class?

Middle School Questions

- What is the enrollment and average class size in the school?
- What programs are available to address the needs of children in this age group who are maturing at different rates during puberty?
- What is the role of a middle school guidance counselor? About how many students are assigned to each counselor?
- Are there mentoring, peer counseling, or tutoring programs available to students who need more help?
- Are students assigned lockers?
- How much homework should I expect my child to do?
- How are students prepared for the transition to high school? How can parents ease the transition?
- Are all students expected to take and pass algebra in order to move on to high school?
- What does the school do to help students get on track for college—the right courses, college financing information?

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High School Questions

- What is the enrollment and average class size in the school?
- What guidance is offered students regarding course selection? What can parents do to help?
- What help is available to students regarding college selection, SAT preparation, financial aid, college applications, and scholarship information? What can parents do to obtain this information?
- What advanced placement courses and subjects are available? How are students selected for these courses?
- Are there peer counseling, tutoring, or mentoring programs? Is community service required?
- Are internships, apprenticeships, or other school-to-work programs available?
- What percentage of students graduate?
- What percentage of students go on to four-year colleges or universities? Two-year community colleges? Vocational education?
- Does the school participate in or sponsor technology events such as "Net Day"?
- Are parents involved in developing the school's technology plan?

General Questions

What is the school policy regarding

- academic requirements?
- communication between the school and parents—the best way to contact child's teacher?
- homework?
- class schedules?
- testing?
- promotion to the next grade?
- enrichment programs—gifted/talented, tutoring?
- volunteer opportunities—who to contact?
- safety?
- health education programs?
- prevention programs—drug, violence?
- parent involvement programs?
- school improvement plan?
- visitors?
- school sponsored parent/student activities?
- health and medication?
- discipline?
- dress?
- the school calendar—holidays, teacher workdays, special activities?
- teacher qualifications?
- student placement?
- before- and after-school care?
- community service?
- services for children with special needs?
- after-school activities?
- activity fees—field trips, sports, after-school clubs?
- financial assistance for activities, supplies?
- transportation to and from school, bus passes, bus routes, parking, drop-off area?
- school breakfasts and lunches?
- absence from school?
- disability accommodation?
- the Parent Teacher Association?
- non-English speaking assistance?
- computers—student access, use, software packages, does school participate in a computer donation program, Internet access, and is it monitored?

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This information pamphlet is designed to serve as a prompt for principals and teachers to help them anticipate questions parents might ask when they send their children to school for the first time or when they enroll their children in a different school. It can also serve as a checklist for parents as they excitedly become involved with their children's education. Just as we are urged to bring questions with us when we visit the doctor, parents and school officials might want a list to help them remember important points to address. The answers to these questions might serve as themes for short articles in school newsletters or this flyer could serve as a handout at conferences or meetings with parents. As one school principal said, "It would be great to have a reminder of the questions I might get from parents as I prepare to welcome students and their parents back to school." We hope that this list will help.

This information was developed from contributions made by teachers, researchers, and parents through the National Parent Information Network (NPIN) of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education. Reports of the Carnegie Task Force on Learning in the Primary Grades and the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development were also consulted. Dianne Rothenberg of the ERIC Clearinghouse and Joan Trumble of the National Library of Education coordinated the NPIN contributions. OERI staff who reviewed, edited, and designed the brochure include Linda Darby, Cynthia Hearn Dorfman, Bob LeGrand, Simone Miranda, Christopher Sheedy, Kim Silverman, and Barbara Vespucci.

For more information on family involvement initiatives and related publications, contact 1-800-USA-LEARN, or the National Library of Education at 1-800-424-1616, or visit us via the Internet at http://www.ed.gov.

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